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MAO TSE-TUNG

PREFACE AND POSTSCRIPT TO "RURAL SURVEY"

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PREFACE

The Party's rural policy now is not one of agrarian revolution as during the ten-year civil war but one of the Anti-Japanese National United Front. The whole Party should execute the directives of the Central Committee of the Party of July 7 and December 25, 1940,[1] as well as those of the forthcoming Seventh National Congress. It is only for the purpose of helping comrades to find a way to tackle problems that the following materials are published. What constitutes a very grave danger is the fact that many of our comrades should have been placed in the position of giving guidance and direction while they have not yet broken off the habit of doing things in a crude, perfunctory fashion with little understanding of their nature and sometimes even in complete ignorance of the conditions prevailing at lower levels. No really good leadership can result from the absence of a real, specific knowledge of the actual conditions of the classes in Chinese society.

The only way to know the conditions is to make

[1] The first directive refers to the *Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Current Situation and the Party's Policy*, and the second to the article *On Policy*, Vol. III of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*.

an investigation of society, to investigate the life and activities of each social class. For those whose duty it is to give guidance and direction, the most essential method of knowing the conditions is that they should, proceeding according to plan, devote their attention to a number of cities and villages and make a comprehensive survey of each of them from the basic viewpoint of Marxism, *i.e.* by means of class analysis. Only by doing so can one grasp the essentials of China's social problems.

To do this, we should first cast our eyes down and not hold our heads high and gaze skywards. If a person does not care, or does not make up his mind, to cast his eyes down, he can never really learn anything about China.

Secondly, fact-finding conferences should be held. Certainly we can acquire no complete knowledge by looking in all directions and listening to gossip. Of the data I have obtained through fact-finding conferences, those on Hunan and the Chingkang mountains are lost. The materials published here consist mainly of the *Survey of Hsingkuo*, the *Survey of Changkang Township*, and the *Survey of Tsaiki Township*. Holding a fact-finding conference is the simplest, the most practicable, and the most reliable method which has taught me a great deal, and which gives me a better education than any university. The attendance of the conference ought to include the really experienced cadres of the middle and lower rank or the local people. During my investigation of the five

counties in Hunan and the two counties in the Chingkang mountains, I approached the middle ranking responsible cadres in the counties, and during the Sunwu investigation I approached a number of cadres of both middle and lower rank, as well as a needy *hsiuts'ai,*[1] an insolvent ex-president of the chamber of commerce and an erstwhile petty official in charge of county revenue. All of them gave me a great deal of information which I had never had before. The man who for the first time gave me a complete picture of the rottenness of Chinese jails was a petty jailer I met during my investigation in Hengshan, Hunan. During my investigation in the county of Hsingkuo and the townships of Changkang and Tsaiki, I approached comrades at the township level and ordinary peasants. All these people—the cadres, the peasants, the *hsiuts'ai,* the jailer, the merchant, and the revenue clerk—were my respected and beloved teachers and, in order to learn from them as a pupil, I, as was only proper, was respectful and industrious and adopted a comradely attitude towards them, for otherwise they would have paid no heed to me and would have told me nothing they knew, or at least not everything. A fact-finding conference does not require a large attendance; three to five, or seven or eight persons will be enough. But ample time must be allowed and an outline of investigation prepared beforehand and, furthermore, one must personally put questions to the participants and

[1] A person who passed the first grade of the imperial examination held in his own county.

jot down the answers, and hold discussions with them. Therefore we cannot do it or do it well unless we are full of enthusiasm, determined to cast our eyes down, anxious to learn and ready to become humble pupils by dropping our pretentious airs and graces. It must be understood that the masses are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often ridiculously childish, and unless we grasp this point we shall never be able to acquire even elementary knowledge.

I should like to reiterate that the present materials for reference are published mainly to show the method of knowing the conditions prevailing down below, and not to request comrades to memorise the specific data and the conclusions drawn from them. Generally speaking, unlike the bourgeoisie of Europe, America or Japan, the Chinese bourgeoisie, still in its infancy, has as yet not been and will never be able to provide us with any comprehensive or even preliminary data on social conditions, and this makes it necessary for us to collect them ourselves. Specifically speaking, people engaged in practical work must at all times endeavour to know the changing conditions—something for which no Communist Party in any country can rely on others. Therefore, all people engaged in practical work must investigate the conditions prevailing at the lower levels. Such investigations are especially necessary for those who know only theory but not the actual conditions, for otherwise they will be unable to link theory with practice. Although my assertion "No investigation, no right to speak" has

been ridiculed by some people as "narrow empiricism," yet even now I do not regret having said it and, what is more, I still stick to it. There are many people who, the moment they take office, noisily speechify and criticise, picking faults right and left; yet in fact ten out of ten such people meet with failure. For, not based on comprehensive investigation, their speeches and criticisms are but ignorant and idle chatter. Our Party has suffered incalculably at the hands of this type of "imperial envoys." And the air is thick with such "imperial envoys," who can be seen almost everywhere. Stalin rightly says: "Theory becomes aimless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice." And he rightly adds: "Practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory."[1] Except for those practical workers who lack vision, perspective and foresight, no one can be labelled a "narrow empiricist."

Today I still feel keenly the need to make a comprehensive study of China and of other countries of the world; this has to do with the scantiness of my own knowledge along these lines and does not imply that I know everything while others are ignorant. It is my wish that, together with comrades of the whole Party, I should continue to be a pupil of the masses and learn from them.

March 17, 1941

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[1] J. V. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, English ed., New York, 1939, p. 28.

POSTSCRIPT

The experiences of the ten-year civil war may serve as our best and most appropriate guidance in the present period of the Anti-Japanese War. But this only refers to the aspect of linking ourselves with the masses and mobilising them to oppose the enemy, and not to the aspect of tactical line. The Party's tactical line at present is different in principle from that in the past. In the past we opposed the landlords and the counter-revolutionary bourgeois, but at present we unite with all the landlords and the bourgeois who are not opposed to the Resistance to Japan. Even in the latter period of the ten-year civil war, we were wrong in not adopting different policies towards the reactionary government and party that launched armed attacks on us on the one hand and, on the other, all the social strata with a capitalist character that were under our régime, or towards the different cliques in the reactionary government and party. At that time, we pursued a policy of "all struggle" towards all sections of society except the peasantry and the lower stratum of the urban petty bourgeoisie—a policy undoubtedly erroneous. In agrarian policy we also made a mistake in repudiating the correct policy adopted in the earlier and middle periods of the ten-year civil war,[1] *i.e.* allotting the

[1] The earlier period of the ten-year civil war lasted from late 1927 to late 1928, and is generally known as the period

same amount of land to the landlords as to the peasants, so that the landlords could engage in farming and would not become displaced or turn to banditry to disturb peace and order. At present the Party policy must be different from those mentioned above; neither one of "all struggle and no alliance," nor one of "all alliance and no struggle" (*e.g.* the *Ch'en Tu-hsiu-ism* of 1927), it is rather a policy of uniting with all social strata opposed to Japanese imperialism and establishing a united front with them, yet waging different forms of struggle against them according to the different degrees of their vacillation and reaction, of their tendency to capitulate to the enemy and oppose the Communists and the people. The present policy is a dual policy, combining "alliance" with "struggle." The labour policy is a dual policy of properly improving the living conditions of the workers without impeding the reasonable capitalist economic developments. The agrarian policy is a dual policy of demanding that the

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of the Chingkang mountains; the middle period lasted from early 1929 to the autumn of 1931, *i.e.* from the establishment of the Central Red base area to the victorious conclusion of the campaign against the Kuomintang's third "encirclement and annihilation"; the final period lasted from the end of that campaign to the enlarged meeting of the Central Political Bureau held in Tsunyi, Kweichow. The Tsunyi meeting of January 1935 put an end to the "Left" opportunist line that had dominated the Party during 1931-4 and steered the Party back to the correct line. *Cf. Resolution on Some Historical Problems* (appendix to *Our Study and the Current Situation*), Sec. III.

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landlords reduce rent and interest and stipulating that the peasants pay this reduced amount of rent and interest. In regard to political rights, the policy is a dual one of granting all the anti-Japanese landlords and capitalists the same personal, political and property rights as the workers and peasants, while guarding against all possible counter-revolutionary activities on their part. State and co-operative enterprises in our economy should be developed, but in the rural base areas today the main economic sector does not consist of state enterprises, but private ones; we ought to give the sector of non-monopoly capitalism in our economy a chance to develop in order to oppose Japanese imperialism and semi-feudalism. This is the most revolutionary policy for China today and to oppose or impede the execution of this policy is undoubtedly a mistake. To preserve strictly and resolutely the communist integrity of Party members, and to protect and develop properly the capitalist sector of social economy that is beneficial, are both indispensable tasks for us in the period of resisting Japan and building up a democratic republic. In this period it is possible that some Communists will be corrupted by the bourgeoisie and that capitalist ideas may arise among Communists; we must wage struggles against such decadent ideas in the Party, but we should not mistakenly transfer the struggle against capitalist ideas inside the Party to the field of social economy and oppose the capitalist sector of economy. We must draw a sharp line of demarcation between the two.

The Chinese Communist Party is working under the most complicated conditions, and all Party members, especially the cadres, must steel themselves into fighters who understand Marxist tactics, because to view problems one-sidedly and naïvely will never lead the revolution to victory.

April 19, 1941